

The background is a solid orange color with a repeating pattern of light orange icons. The icons include donuts, ice cream cones, and round pastries or cookies, scattered across the entire page.

Fill Your Fridge!

Memmoirs of a Junk Food Addict

Trevor Carss

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Memoirs of a Junk Food Addict

By Trevor Carss

Table of Contents

[Preface](#)

[Serious disclaimer from the author \(by lawyer request\)](#)

[Introduction: I'm an addict](#)

[Eating ice cream every day for a year](#)

[Relationships](#)

[Skin issues](#)

[Therapy](#)

[Little Debbies](#)

[Disclaimer \(not a doctor/dietitian\)](#)

[When one pint is not enough](#)

[Fried chicken](#)

[Why having a full fridge is good \(mine used to be empty\)](#)

[Food-hopping](#)

[Meditation and mindfulness methods](#)

[Whopper Woman](#)

[The tales of junk food demon \(A.K.A. psychological torture on your mind\)](#)

[In-N-Out Burger](#)

[Reese's Fast Break](#)

[Mom's secret stash of Welch's Fruit Snacks](#)

[I won't binge tomorrow](#)

[Sugar is more addictive than cocaine](#)

[Donut dealer](#)

[Saying sugar is dog poo doesn't work](#)

[Shirts smell better after a few days clean](#)

[0 months sober from sugar \(where we see addiction next\)](#)

[Will an upcoming date motivate me to behave? \(It didn't\)](#)

[Support groups for accountability \(Reddit, etc\)](#)

[Grapes: a sugar fix without the crash \(in moderation\)](#)

[Candy is not funny \(but I'll have some\)](#)

[Memory loss \(initial signs\)](#)

[The AA model for recovery](#)

[Shopping the outer edges of the grocery store is flawed \(the bakery is there!\)](#)

[Playful cereals and kids = ew](#)

[Okinawa and fast food](#)

[Diet plans for cheap](#)

[Carnivores and vegans](#)

[Centenarians living on a sugar diet](#)

[Fasting is a nice idea, but not a reality with binge-eaters](#)

[High-protein high-fat](#)

[Sugar distributors are drug dealers](#)

[Morning smoothie to curb cravings](#)

[Stop the weird short-term fitness challenges](#)

[People who should be healthy, aren't](#)

[Exercises from home](#)

[Never shop in a grocery store past 11am](#)

[Walking](#)

[Netflix addiction](#)

[Comedian addicts](#)

[Handling social outings](#)

[Emotions and relationships with food](#)

[Life transformation](#)

[Bonus section that didn't make the cut](#)

Preface

I was debating on the title of this book. Should it be a memoir? Should it be an unconventional guide? Fiction? Nonfiction? Children's book? Donuts.

See, there is a snapshot of my squirrel-like thinking. As a person who has no background in nutrition, I simply cannot tell you what to do with your life. Arguably, the nutritionists shouldn't either. If you went to medical school today, you would not learn about proper nutrition or diet. That explains why prescription meds are so popular among the docs. Even Harvard med students are graduating without a learning foundation in food.

While attending my university's psychology classes, we never talked about eating habits and their connection to the mind. Not one bit. Most of us can barely control our minds after school graduation.

Now I'm just an average dude with a marketing degree; of course, this is why my book will become a #1 bestseller :) Due to my lack of credentials, there is no way I can call this a guide and tell you to follow it. Instead, I will share my ~~cream-filled~~ fun-filled journey in the hopes that you will find solace in the fact that you are not alone. I hope my stream-of-consciousness writing approach is not too chaotic here. Editors would have a field day with my writing, which is why I say forget them, let's freestyle this. Forget the book cover designers too, I'll put something together and slap it on the front.

We're here to bond, you and I. I'm about to share intimate details with you. Untouched, raw and true-to-life details.

When searching on Amazon for books related to junk food addiction, you will find several scientific copies by educated people. However, few books bring an addict's perspective to the dinner table (pun intended). You will get to see the dark moments, as well as the light ones here. There are actually light moments.

If you don't want to read through this whole thing, definitely skim section-by-section with the table of contents. Keep in mind that this book is quite small and should only take one sitting to plow through (you're welcome).

If you are tired of reading about junk food addiction, I can offer one suggestion that helped me at the time of writing this book. That's right, you can stop reading this book after my one golden, anecdotal, unprofessional, outlandish, unconventional suggestion. I'll give you a hint. That suggestion is the book title.

Fill your fridge.

Serious disclaimer from the author (by lawyer request)

All psychological food disorders are serious business. This book was designed to bring a positive, humorous perspective to the situation in the hopes that you and I will make it through this together. In my heart, I know you can recover and regain your life. This story was crafted with the deepest of love. If you cannot afford the book, I have it available as a free PDF on my website at TrevorCarss.com. This isn't about book sales. It's about sharing a message in the hopes that I can somehow save destroyed lives. I am trying with mine.

Sugar can kill us over time, and if your situation is serious, I hope you are in good hands. If not, do grab this book and read it with a loved one. They might be able to laugh with you while hugging you lovingly. If that might be a tall task, anonymous professional advice is available online and offline, with economical options available for all situations. Lastly, I really do hope you get better. If my words can bring you a laugh or two, that means something special. If it helps you change your life for the better, that would be even specialer. Is that even a word?

xoxo

Trev

Introduction: I'm an addict

I see sugar, I run towards it. Think Denzel Washington from that movie Flight, but nearly ten times worse.

How did this ever happen? Why am I losing control of my eating habits? I liked sugar, but never to the extent that it would rule my day and rule my mind.

I think it all started in corporate. I remember when we had these massive birthday cakes every month to celebrate with staff. I would literally leave my work desk to scurry into the lunchroom and munch away on yet another piece. At the end of the workday, I would hastily take two more pieces with me for the car ride home. Imagine driving with a plate of birthday cake, fork, napkin and the steering wheel.

I was in a world where dietary rules didn't matter to me. Nothing would make a difference to my weight (high metabolism), but I knew deep down that this would affect my internal organs in no time at all.

I wish I could say that this all ended and my life magically corrected itself.

It didn't.

Sure, a few extra pieces of birthday cake can't hurt. Five years later, this small indulgence turned into days filled with every sugary treat imaginable, affecting my career, finances, relationships and more.

Here is my story and here is what I'm doing to take control.

Eating ice cream every day for a year

It was only supposed to be a 30-day challenge. It ended up being more. 365 days. Maybe even more than that. My favourite ice cream to eat is Ben & Jerry's Half Baked. Tonight Dough is tasty too. I will also accept Häagen-Dazs. Just a few years ago I never even tasted Ben & Jerry's. Where was this all coming from, this desire to be eating ice cream nonstop? Okay, I'm not sure how this section fits into the book, but alas, it's bleeding on the page. Moving on.

While working in the big city (job #2 after leaving the big corporate gig), bakeries lined the streets at every corner. I couldn't get to work without running into something sugary. Every day I would remain dissatisfied with the lunch I had hastily prepared. Instead of eating my lunch, I would look for a hit. Anything to get that coveted sugar-rush and escape the stress that was my 9-to-5 job.

Anything sugary would do the trick, anything at all.

I'm not sure if this sugar addiction had to do with me impulsively leaving that job, but I'm sure it didn't help the situation. When your mind is controlled by a nearby bakery, that's a red flag.

Relationships

I had a girlfriend and job, but it all came crashing down one day. I left both, likely as a result of my mind being unable to handle reality. I'm not here to blame sugar for all of my faults, but it never helped the situation. But I swear, sugar gave me mood swings. Sugar, it's all your fault! I'm sorry for yelling at you, let's make up.

Instead of working on relationships with people, I would resort to finding the nearest donut shop. Hours every day would be spent in isolation, seeking a new taste, a new treat. Even as I was surrounded by people in the grocery aisles, I couldn't be further away from the reality of true human connection. My mind was numb and simply did not allow reality.

Not having a secure job eliminated any structure to my day. Without structure or purpose, you can easily become undisciplined in your day-to-day activities. If you are not scheduling social events in your calendar, things can quickly fall apart.

Skin issues

My skin suffered. Things started happening like never before. Rashes, flakes, redness, itchiness, burning sensations. My face was especially tortured by the addiction, as everything under my eyes and on my cheeks were cosmetically disastrous. Even with prescriptions from several doctors, I couldn't keep the skin at bay.

At first I thought it was just because of the summer months. Maybe I'm starting to react to the sun? The thing is, I've never had this issue in my life, aside from a few rashes on the body.

One doctor suggested I take allergy shots, but I didn't want to destroy my immune system with chemicals. Also, these allergy shots wouldn't stop a reaction and addiction to sugar. Seemed kind of pointless. Sadly, countless teenagers were in that doctor's office, waiting for their expensive dosage that day. How many people are taking allergy shots in this world when they don't even need them?

I let the skin issues suffer, even though just a few days sugar-free would reduce the symptoms I was having. I thought nothing of it. Or maybe, I wanted to blindly destroy myself. Regardless of the visible havoc on my body, I seemed controlled and manipulated by junk food.

Therapy

I remember going to a therapist to address several issues in my life. When I brought up this unhealthy obsession with junk food, the advice was to sit with the thoughts and see if they pass. If they don't pass, it's okay to allow ourselves that treat.

I tried this, but the second I allowed myself one treat, more flowed in. For some, this advice might work. If you can sit and control your thoughts, it's possible that your urge will pass.

Maybe I never clearly emphasized how serious the problem was. I did not have any self-control when introduced to junk food. I never mentioned the fact that storefronts would be a trigger. Price tags would be a trigger. Anything was a trigger.

I needed to be able to walk through the freezer aisle without grabbing ice cream. I couldn't.

Little Debbies

Little Debbies, everywhere.

Little Debbies, everywhere.

Tasty tiny snack cakes, one-by-one.

Oh Little Debbie, you're so much fun.

Why are you so good to me?

Oh look, there's a Twinkie!

Little Debbies, everywhere.

Little Debbies, everywhere.

Disclaimer (not a doctor/dietitian)

I thought it would be wise to mention that I am not a doctor or dietitian. If my book causes you to relapse into submission, it means we still have some work to do. Junk food will never go away. It's not like heroin, hiding in isolated places. If you crave ice cream after reading this, my sincerest apologies.

If you are in a hard place and you can't escape, professional advice might be for you. Only you can decide this. Or, if you're like me and want to try something unorthodox, let's keep reading this book.

When one pint is not enough

We never talk about alcohol and sugar as similar addictions. Sure, we talk about abuse of these substances, but I think there is something deeper. The biochemistry in our brains suggests we need that next pint for a better sensation. If someone needs more and more dosages, whether it be alcohol or sugar, that's an addiction problem.

When I moved from 500mL to 1L of ice cream per day, I knew that sugar became numb to me. I was chasing a bigger and bigger hit. I needed more and more. Just as future alcoholics start with one glass and move up as tolerance gets stronger, I was becoming tolerant of ice cream.

Fried chicken

11pm.

I want fried chicken.

Forget being responsible.

Time to drive in my automobile.

I want fried chicken.

Gimme gimme gimme grease.

Batter batter batter, please.

Note: there is no sugar in the fried chicken (unless you get those sweet sweet dipping sauces mmm), but I only realized that after writing this poem. Let's keep the poem, it's cute. Plus fried chicken is just plain bad for you.

Why having a full fridge is good (mine used to be empty)

Okay, I've been going on and on about sugar, but let's talk about the unconventional title of this book: Fill Your Fridge!

Why would I be encouraging people to fill their fridges?

Well, I had an empty fridge for most days during my addiction, and there are a number of cause-and-effect variables at play here...

Unfilled fridge = eating out + no control of your day.

Unfilled fridge = I'm tired, let's buy ice cream.

I would get to the point of never cooking anything. Empty fridge? Time for McDonald's!

It wasn't until I started filling my fridge that I curbed cravings to an extent.

Another acceptable book title could have been "Eat Before You're Hungry". With a full fridge, you will be less likely to wait on eating. That's actually a good thing to me. If you wait and wait and wait, you won't want to cook or prep anything, even a bowl of nuts. By eating enough and eating before temptation, you regain control.

Now those with psychological eating disorders might be struggling with this, and naturally so. I have been skipping breakfast ever since corporate, only to realize I would fast, then binge, then fast, then binge..Fasting is fine, but only if you aren't binge-eating to break your fast. I will talk more about this in another section.

A full fridge is a sign of responsibility, indicating that you are wearing big-boy/girl pants. That's good. Being irresponsible and reactive will only turn you into an addict.

Consider making a shopping list of the items you always need to have in your fridge. Here is my list, which I keep on my phone, in a notes app:

- Wild sockeye salmon
- Albacore tuna
- Sweet potato
- Spinach
- Kale
- Sauerkraut
- Carrots
- Olive oil
- Coconut oil
- Avocados
- Blueberries
- Raspberries

Pink salt
Walnuts
Pumpkin seeds
Sunflower seeds
Macadamia nuts
Cauliflower
Broccoli
Chia seeds
Cucumber
Coconut milk
Hemp protein

Food allergies:

Hazelnuts
Almonds
Banana
Celery
Sesame
Oranges
Egg whites
Cow milk
Goat milk
Pistachio
Cashew
Brazil nut
Pea (borderline)
Casein (borderline)
Wheat (borderline)
Barley (borderline)
SUGAR!

The food allergies list helps to remind me what I need to avoid when filling my fridge. Talk to your physician about allergy tests - mine was free, but I'm in Canada. I also did an extensive IgG allergy test, where they take blood to see how sensitive you are to various foods. The test is over \$400 here in Canada, and I'm not sure I can wholeheartedly recommend it. I question the validity of this test, especially since you are more likely to be sensitive to foods that are already in your diet. Once again, have a discussion with your physician to see what makes sense.

By eliminating foods you are allergic to, you reduce the chances of inflammation and mood deregulation in your body. My binges were caused by sugar primarily, but also these food sensitivities can have an effect. I always wondered why egg salad would cause diarrhea for me. Now I know - it's those darn egg whites.

Who is honestly happy after a diarrhea session? Not too many. You'll likely reach for that can of ginger ale over a glass of water or nutritious food. I know I would.

Food-hopping

We all know about bar-hopping, but how about with food? Have you ever hit up all of the fast food joints, bakeries and ice cream stores in your neighbourhood, within a few short hours?

Food-hopping was my ultimate demise, week-by-week. Fortunately, I didn't build this particular food habit into a daily thing. Just weekly. Sometimes a few times a week. If I food-hopped every day, I would be dead by now.

You might be thinking: Trev, that can't be too bad! It's just every few days!

Hmm, not if your day consists of starting off at McDonald's in the morning for two McMuffins. Then the donut shop for three donuts. Then ice cream x2 pints. Then a whole pack of Little Debbie's (I like the Zebra Cakes, very cute packaging) or cookies or king size chocolate bars, or all combined. Then a big juicy burger to top it all off. That would be a food-hop day for me, one junk food distributor after another. Thousands of calories, probably tens of thousands. All pure junk. It was enough to wipe out that day, and the next day for recovery. Mornings would be rough after a food-hop, just like a disguised hangover.

To counterbalance the food-hop session, exercising two hours each day kept me in check...if you can call it exercise. I was trudging along like a zombie most days.

Fats are friends

Some will say that high-calorie foods like nuts or oils are best to be limited. If you have a junk food addiction, eating nuts and oils could be the best way for you to stop. You saw my shopping list there. I have several oils that I use, several nuts and several seeds. I get serious calories from these foods alone, and those calories help me avoid junk food. There is a significant difference between healthy and unhealthy calories.

I will shake a monkey fist in the air the next time someone says walnuts are too fattening or calorie-rich.

Did I mention I'm not a doctor? If you are following a particular diet and absolutely have to reduce calories, look at swapping sugary junk food for nuts. Most people who have to reduce calories are the people eating junk food. I have never come across a person who eats too much spinach. They are probably out there though (cough, rabbits, cough).

Meditation and mindfulness methods

When it comes to thought control, meditation seems to be the hit thing these days. If I did more of it, this book might look a little more cohesive.

I am just getting into it as a daily habit, even if I take a breath for a few quick minutes. Most people get caught up in the form, technique, phone apps, etc., but laying down on my back, with knees bent 90 degrees and feet planted on the ground seems to do the trick for me. Sometimes I fall asleep, but I honestly can't complain about that.

Laying on your back relieves any tension you may be getting from attempting upright meditation. My approach is definitely unconventional, just like everything else in this book.

For breathing, I just breathe normally and, as time goes by, more calmly. This whole inhale exhale thing is really dramatic. Meditation is simple, requiring just your body and mind. That's just one addict's opinion to another.

For thinking, I just watch my thoughts pass by. I don't control what happens.

I've tried various methods of meditation, all of which never stuck as a habit. I've modified it to suit my preferences. If you are finding meditation to be uncomfortable, give my approach a go, or modify it to suit you. You might just enjoy it.

When thoughts about ice cream and cookies come floating in,
You will be well-prepared to send them away without sin (not religious, but I needed a clever rhyme).

Whopper Woman

Seeing an elderly woman struggle to afford a meal at Burger King. It broke my heart. Just terrible. She frequented that location every few days and couldn't find enough money for the meal. She begged and pleaded and put up a fuss and asked for the manager and.... it got my thinking: why am I here, waiting in line to order something I will regret? Why do I want a dark cloud over my head, a dark cloud from wasting away my life on junk food?

This is stupid! I don't want to be the Whopper Woman! I'm out of here! Forget the Whopper!

...I proceeded to order my Whopper meal, chicken nuggets and dessert, devouring it all in a few minutes. I would return next week. You bet your bum I would. Oooo Whopper Wednesdays.

The tales of junk food demon (A.K.A. psychological torture on your mind)

You get really stressed and sweaty when all you can think about is junk food. Do I leave my apartment at 11pm and drive one hour for fried chicken, just after finishing a whole box of Little Debbie's? We all know the answer, but a heck ya will do.

Instead of being responsible for my life, I spent time battling with my mind every day. Some days I would actually win. In a month, I might win one or two battles with the junk food demon. It wasn't a lot, but I was ecstatic when I won. I usually cried epic man-tears those days.

The junk food demon is inside all of us. It lurks in the cupboards, it sleeps on the same pillow as you, it's in the air...can you smell those McDonald's french fries beyond the Golden Arches?

Sometimes you have to live so terribly in order to make a change. Rock-bottom is an awakening, but some never escape from it. Just remember that Whopper Woman.

In-N-Out Burger

We booked a trip, rented a van and headed on down to California. The whole time, I wanted In-N-Out Burger more than Disneyland.

I was not disappointed.

Reese's Fast Break

Chocolate. Peanut butter. Nougat.

Say it with me now:

Chocolate. Peanut butter. Nougat.

Louder!

CHOCOLATE! PEANUT BUTTER! NOUGAT!

Thank you. Now give me my Reese's Fast Break.

Mom's secret stash of Welch's Fruit Snacks

You know those little chewy snacks in the shape of fruit? Yup, pure sugary goodness for your kids.

But let's be honest. The grown-ups love them too. We look forward to visits with the parents, just so we can indulge in these treats.

Did I mention they are gluten-free and preservative-free? Mmmmmm.

I won't binge tomorrow

Accepting and moving on from bad days is hard. We often say this will be the last straw, the last time we ever eat junk food. We go out with a bang and food-hop like crazy that day in the hopes of consuming all that we love before saying goodbye.

Even a Whopper Woman can't scare us, and we find ourselves back in line at the local donut shop, hungover from junk food and ready to pounce on treats all over again.

To not binge tomorrow, it takes a little bit of willpower and a little bit of planning to follow through with your objective. Fill your fridge! Eat before you're hungry! It's all easy to say that the binge-eating will stop, but you really have to want it.

I love devouring self-help books in the hope that my life will be better tomorrow. After ten-plus years of personal development consumption, my life could be better, even without the ra-ra and clapping.

It starts with a life plan. You need to master these 33 areas of your life in order to reach enlightenment. What's incredible is I'm giving you this tremendous value away for free. I just need your email, life insurance number and deed to your home. Trust me, your life will be better.

^ That paragraph was meant to be a funny (hey, I would think it was legit too).

Where was I getting at? Oh, yes, now I remember. Saying your life will be better tomorrow is a fallacy. You actually have to think of a reason why it would be, and you have to actively do something about it. 3, 2, 1, action! No amount of life categories will prep you for sudden urges, especially that fluffy, delectable chocolate loaf from the Starbuck's on every street corner.

After working in corporate, I've seen countless people saying they will do XYZ tomorrow (myself included), only to not do it. Why? Because there isn't one. See what I did there?

You likely had the motivation in a moment, some burst of energy pulling you in a positive direction.

Poo on motivation. Give me a boring man and I will show you brilliance behind his eyes. Success is a series of extremely small wins, wins so small that no one will care what you do.

If you want to stop bingeing tomorrow, start smaller than these false promises.

Fill your fridge.

Sugar is more addictive than cocaine

Fortunately I can't say this from personal experience (no hard drugs here), but science is saying sugar is tough to stay sober from. Great, I'm not a lunatic after all (maybe a little).

If science is making this claim, where is sugar regulation? Do we have to somehow die on sugar overdoses before anyone takes notice? Sugar is everywhere, with no social support to help addicts. There is a ton of peer pressure to keep consuming because it all tastes good and won't kill you on the spot.

But with obesity growing in the world, maybe I'm not as bad of an addict as I thought. When will someone wake up and control what goes into our grocery stores?

Something like 70+% of food items in a grocery store have added sugar. Companies know that they can make a killing off of sugar addictions, and obviously governments will love them long time when it comes to the amount of taxes they bring in from these corporations.

Hey, maybe this book will be an awakening!

Probably not, sugar is everywhere and people (bakers, corporations, grocers, donut dealers) will hate me for making any noise.

Donut dealer

Come on in, you know you want one. Come grab a piece of this fluffy goodness. Don't let me go to waste now. It's near closing time and I'll make you feel extra comfortable. Grab a nibble before we run out. It's almost closing time. Child, don'tchu worry about a thing. Come on in for a taste, it's just a taste, you know.

Come on in, you know you want one.

Saying sugar is dog poo doesn't work

I kept associating sugary foods with dog poo. Hmm, for some reason I must really like dog poo, because I'm still holding a donut! In reality, true addicts will lick sugar off the ground. No poo can detract from that high. Ooohh baby.

Also, do you really want to associate things with incorrect things? How bizarre will we all become if we see our own poo and scream?

Instead, read this book title again and think about how pretty the cover design is.

Is dog poo pretty? Nope, and I definitely don't want to be thinking about it at every stoplight (look there's a Wendy's!).

Shirts smell better after a few days clean

All of a sudden, I reeked of B.O. after just an hour of wearing a fresh tee. I got rid of all my t-shirts, thinking that they were made of terrible fabrics. 100% polyester. 100% cotton. It didn't seem to matter which fabric I wore! I learned this after splurging on seven new 100% cotton t-shirts with excellent quality reviews from consumers.

Okay, it must be me. I am now smelling differently. My sweat composition must be different.

It is. Turns out that going a few days without sugar improved my scent just a little bit. I'm not 100% sure on this, but it seems like sugar causes baaaad B.O., at least for me.

0 months sober from sugar (where we see addiction next)

Hi, I'm Trev and I'm an addict.

Hi Trev! How many months sober?

Well, I just finished a six-pack of donuts on the way here, so I guess 0. I was doing well but my social anxiety around this event got the best of me.

Will an upcoming date motivate me to behave? (It didn't)

I haven't had the best of luck with ladies in my lifetime. Even my ex-girlfriends were constantly saying how they had settled on this skinny, nerd-like creature without any life aims or ambitions. They made excuses not to hang out with me, and instead went out to party or allegedly cheat (and I'm not talking about cheat as in cheat day, if you know what I mean :).

But newly single, I thought for sure that the desire to find a girlfriend would motivate me to clean up my ways. It didn't. I ended up going on dates with red, flaky skin, occasionally terrible B.O. and little to no self-confidence. No, no, no, I was the one with red, flaky skin, terrible B.O. and self-confidence issues, just describing me there.

So, all my fellow addicts out there, I hate to break it to you, but dates are not going to motivate you. You have to clean yourself up for you and you only.

I'm sorry to the ladies who had to endure the B.O.

Support groups for accountability (Reddit, etc)

What I think is great: communities to talk about your binge-eating with others.

What I think is not so great: communities to talk about your binge-eating with others.

You need to be able to handle feedback if you plan on joining these communities. If you can't, you will be...eaten alive.

Social media has some good things going for it in terms of connection. It also has some bad things going for it in terms of connection.

Are you tired of my vague responses? Do I sound like a consultant yet? It depends hehe!

We just have people hiding behind computer screens, giving advice and offering criticisms without knowing the full picture. Tread carefully and be prepared for the haters. They are struggling too and likely just want to vent at anyone they can get a hold of. If you have thick skin, give these support communities a try.

If not, consider an offline group.

Or fill your fridge. Just sayin'.

Grapes: a sugar fix without the crash (in moderation)

Another secret tip, brought to you by Trev.

Grapes are a nice way to swap junk for natural, healthy sweetness.

I like the red ones. I hope you do too.

Extra extra!: alcohol is sugar (not)

So we know donuts, ice cream and cake are sugar. Did we know alcohol is too? Oops, nope, that myth was busted. If you look at the nutrition label of beer, it looks like the health quality of water. It's all so confusing. Alcohol actually makes us obese because it quickly metabolizes into fat upon digestion.

There are many studies saying alcohol converts to sugar, but it's really fat. You can see why food consumption is so confusing for the every day shopper.

We can take this confusion across the board for sugary items, like bread (yep), granola bars (definitely) and protein powders (you betcha). No one taught us how to navigate the grocery store and say no to things, but here we are, out in the wilderness, fending for ourselves.

Luckily, I never became an alcoholic, because that would be a more expensive endeavour than junk food. Each pint costs serious money, and it goes down easier than a pint of ice cream. Can I get a refill?

Candy is not funny (but I'll have some)

Who wants Coke bottles and gummi worms? I know I do. Glad you've made it this far. Thanks for sticking with me. This book is a bit chaotic, but it wouldn't be an addict's book if it wasn't.

Did you fill your fridge yet?

I'm not sure if I've said anything here to clarify, but you should probably fill your fridge with wholesome foods, not candy. Candy is not funny (but I'll have some).

Memory loss (initial signs)

I hit the age of 30 and noticed my memory was faltering a bit. Strange. I've had lapses before, but now it had turned into several short-term memory failures within a day!

Surely sugar is to blame here? Don't call me Shirley.

After just a few days off of sugar, I noticed a bit of an improvement in memory. We'll see how things go over time. I hope it's not Alzheimer's.

The AA model for recovery

Here are the 12 recovery steps for alcoholics, pulled from Wikipedia (reliable source). I wonder if we can apply them to junk food addiction?

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This doesn't really work for me. I'm agnostic. I'm sure atheists would burn the list on a stake. Great principles though, and this has worked for millions of people.

Shopping the outer edges of the grocery store is flawed (the bakery is there!)

I've been to some grocery stores where the fruit and vegetables are in the middle, stop telling me to stay on the outside ahhhhhh!

Also, the bakery is always around the edges, c'mon professor!

That grocery store food will never leave us. Always haunt us. It's waving, saying hello.

Come on down to the soda aisle!!! We have just what you're looking for yeeehaaaa!

Coca-Cola?

How about grape soda?

Have you seen Yoda?

Makes you want McDonald's just thinking about it. Too many choices. Must have fast food instead. I hate you grocery store, why do you have to be so mean to me?

Playful cereals and kids = ew

I know we're talking adult-to-adult here, but what about kids?! We're feeding them colourful cereals and tasty granola bars when they're essentially all candy!

Oh I really need me some Lucky Charms about now. When I was a wee little child, I would eat the regular flakes and save the marshmallows until the end. That way, I could get me a hefty sugar fix in one sip, all in the hopes of catching that rainbow.. Or is it the pot of gold? Aw shucks, I'll grab onto anything (I'm single, remember?).

The bigger problem with society (how many others are affected by something as simple as sugar, yet no regulation?)

Okinawa and fast food

At one point in the nineties, Okinawa, Japan had the best longevity (life expectancy) out of any other city in the world. Within a decade, they dropped substantially in the rankings.

The reason for this? Fast food.

Okinawans were introduced to the Western diet in the nineties, resulting in dramatic food shifts away from what was once filled with clean vegetables and fish.

Incidences of Okinawans dying in their sixties is common now.

If this doesn't outline the impact of fast food on our bodies and our nations, I don't know what will.

Well this section was serious, I wasn't supposed to be so scientific, sorry. In conclusion, we now know why so many Japanese people eat at McDonald's. Tastyyy.

Diet plans for cheap

You might be thinking: Trev, I want to eat clean, but I can't afford it!

Doubt it. While I munched away on pounds and pounds of junk food, I was consuming waaaay more than my body was supposed to be consuming. Why? Addiction.

When you eat clean, your stomach shrinks in size from all that junk food inflammation in your body. You lose weight. You require less food to soothe your soul. Less food equals less dollars.

Although the price of vegetables is skyrocketing, you can still get your nutrients for less cost than the continuous binges we are typically habituated to. Just follow my shopping list in a previous section to help you take the first steps to filling your fridge the healthy way.

Carnivores and vegans

Every modern book about food must contain something about vegans and carnivores. It's the law.

I'm not sure which fad diet is best for you, maybe none of them. I'm agnostic to all of it. What I do see is Okinawans and the mediterranean people followed a very similar diet to pescatarians. We're talking seafood, greens and some fruit. I'm simplifying here, but the diets are essentially clean of processed sugars and junk carbs. These people lived the longest on this kind of diet, supplemented with consistent exercise.

Vegans are still allowed sugar and junk carbs. Just animals are a no. They are likely the most addicted to sugar due to improper meal planning and nutrition deficits. Carnivores have certainly not lived long if we look at the Inuit and wolves (both carnivorous). Even Mexicans, with their love of ground beef in tacos, haven't exactly been at the top of the longevity list. They're about 48th in the world, give or take.

So we seem to be choosing elimination diets on a whim without studying long-term effects on health. No wonder there is such a problem with obesity and binge-eating.

If I look at the data, I would say that the body is designed for a balanced whole food, plant-based diet, most closely resembling the Mediterraneans and pre-fast food Okinawans. That is the diet I'm moving towards in order to stop this addiction properly.

Once again, not a dietitian here. Just going with the facts from smarter people than myself. See what your body reacts to best and stick with that. Unless it's sugar, you slimy little addict you ;)

Centenarians living on a sugar diet

Now there seem to be exceptions to the rule of sugar-free diets. The French consume bread and wine while still having an incredible longevity rank of 5th in the world as of 2018.

Let's note here that the French food they consume is not genetically modified, unlike those Little Debbie's you're about to eat.

Also, you will find instances where centenarians are eating ice cream every day, without any problems. They likely have some genetic miracles going on, they get out and move or they only have ice cream in moderation.

That really is the goal here: life moderation.

We've super-sized everything so much that moderation has become nonexistent in Western society.

Thanks to healthcare, we are able to keep unhealthy folks alive longer, which also explains why people get away with murder. Pop a pill here to keep your heart ticking, consume anything you'd like.

Medications can only take us so far. The real medication is a moderated life.

But hey, the longest-living person of all-time smoked, so who knows, maybe fried chicken is good for you.

Fasting is a nice idea, but not a reality with binge-eaters

Here's a controversial topic: you can skip breakfast.

I did this during my severe junk food addiction. It obviously didn't work so well for me. Sometimes I would skip a whole day of eating and go absolutely crazy the next day. I should mention that intermittent fasting is an excellent idea, as long as you are eating consistently. For instance, I will stop eating by 7pm at night, then eat again by 9am the next day. This routine seems to be working for me right now. No late-night drives to a chicken joint, no binges on potato chips.

If you're binge-eating, scheduling meals is really effective. Just make sure you can get into a standard food prep routine.

I'm not the best cook. I need to have simple meals. I'll do a 9am nutrient-dense veggie smoothie (will show the ingredients in an upcoming section). At noon I'll do a fruit and nut bowl. Dinner is fish and greens. No snacking in between. These nutritious meals are keeping my food cravings at bay. Depending on your schedule you might need to modify your approach.

My fridge is now always filled with my shopping list. Always.

When I fast, it's strategically planned. Maybe, with time, I can go back to skipping breakfast.

High-protein high-fat

If you're depressed, binging, not eating or just have a problem with food, try consuming a high-protein, high-fat meal for breakfast. Try it. You could just follow my smoothie recipe, adding a clean scoop of protein powder to it.

What this does is it makes you full for the day. It regulates your mood. It keeps your hunger in check.

For healthy fats, I like avocados, olive oil and coconut oil, in moderation.

I must be a millennial.

Sugar distributors are drug dealers

Here's an outrageous thought: the sugar industry is a group of drug manufacturers, with bakeries as the distributors / drug dealers.

Seem far-fetched? Not really. When I go to the grocery store, donuts are always the first to go. Bakeries use a primary ingredient to keep their regulars coming back for more: sugar. Nutrition labels are nonexistent in a bakery as you see piles and piles of cookies, just looking up at you, waiting to be devoured with your sweet, sweet drool.

The same people go to these places every day (me), grabbing the same sugary goods. Bakeries are drug dealers, and they never disappoint.

Morning smoothie to curb cravings

Here's my ingredients list for the smoothie:

Frozen berries (just a handful)
Hemp protein
Chia seeds
Cucumber
Broccoli/cauliflower
Coconut oil
Avocado
Pink salt
Coconut milk, unsweetened
Water

Lots of people throw in bananas, chocolate, tons of berries, sweetened milks, sugary protein powders, etc., making the smoothie taste nice and sweet, while giving you a major sugar hit. Be careful there. I'm of the belief that the smoothie should not taste amazing. You're trying to fill yourself up to prevent binging, not binge on liquified sugar.

By making this smoothie, I have over two liters of liquid to keep me at bay for the day. Yes, I'll drink two liters of this, spread out over breakfast, lunch and dinner. You might not need so much, but I'm being proactive.

Try making the smoothie when your willpower is strongest; otherwise, you won't stick to the plan.

Stop the weird short-term fitness challenges

Hey everyone, let's do a 30-day fitness bootcamp challenge!!! Yaaaaay!

Day 31: that was brutal, let's get a Blizzard from Dairy Queen.

You'll just be back on the wagon, bigger and badder than ever before. 30-day challenges rarely ever work with habit change because the whole time, you're just thinking about messing up on day 31. This is you keeping the junk food demon nearby without fully eradicating it.

Sure, a 30-day sugar-free challenge might work for some, but crossing off calendar days is a short-term solution to a deeper problem. You're once again using motivation to fuel your lifestyle changes.

People don't want to do 30 days of pushups or 30 days sugar-free. They want a lifetime habit of those things. How many people end up gaining weight after drastically losing weight? Let's look at a show called the Biggest Loser for more context.

Contestants on the Biggest Loser compete by drastically losing weight. A group of people with similar life challenges are all working together to achieve amazing goals. It's a great concept. I read an article that studied post-show contestants. Of the 14 studied, 13 regained their weight! Several were even heavier than before the show.

It turns out that these people would return to their normal lives and situational circumstances. Mmmm, the tasty stresses of life. When there is no team accountability, who will falter?

A short-term group challenge is a nice idea because it holds people accountable in situations where they might not have the willpower to go it alone.

Key words: nice + idea.

Psychologically, we seem to be flawed. Beyond these fitness challenges, we are isolated with our thoughts and behaviours. We think about that drive-thru on the way home and decide: hey, no one's looking, let me just sneak in and grab a treat (or a dozen).

Ah, the epic cookie jar. Will you give in when you're all alone and no one's looking?

People who should be healthy, aren't

During my online dating adventures, I've come across many people who are gym rats or hiking enthusiasts, yet they are still obese. Where am I going with this? Turns out they bring junk food and alcohol with them in their backpacks and smoothie cups. Jokes, except the obese part.

When we exercise, we feel entitled to indulge afterwards. I just hiked 10 kilometers, so I'm going to eat at the burger joint with unlimited french fries and milkshakes.

There's a saying...burning the candle at both ends.

Hey, these people should be healthy! They're burning calories, they're getting outdoors...

Calories in, calories out baby.

I should mention another disclaimer (better late than never):

Throughout this book, if you feel offended or fat-shamed in any way, please remember that I am a junk food addict (trying to be an ex-junk food addict), and I'm ashamed about my situation as much as you might be about yours. We're in this together, not against each other.

xoxo, Trev

Exercises from home

Here are some quick exercises to do at home, when you're strapped for time or looking to fill your day with something else besides junk food (you will need to Google the correct form for each):

Warm-up -

Back stretch

Cat stretch

Downward dog

Cobra

Squat stretch

Hammys

Shoulder turns

Self hugs

High knees

Punches

Lunges

Strength -

Alt bicep curls

Squats

Shrugs

Shoulder presses

Dips

Bent-over rows

Pushups

Side + front raises

Pike pushups

Bicep curls

Calf raises

Hammer curls

Diamond pushups

Core -

Plank

Donkey kicks

In-and-outs

Bicycle

Mountain climbers

Side planks

Russian twists

Flutter kicks

If you can train your body with a daily exercise habit, you will see significant results in no time, and you will feel better about yourself. If you like your body more, you will take care of it more. There is no excuse with these exercises, which altogether take less than 30 minutes.

When I was binging on food, I spent more than two hours per day, traveling around, picking up the junk and devouring it. When you stop the addiction, you need to fill your time with something else, something to keep you away from a relapse.

Exercise is one excellent way to prevent relapse. Find an activity you gravitate towards and go for it. If you're struggling to leave the house (something I struggle with daily), start with my routine above. All you need is a few dumbbells, or you can just lift your cat or dog.

Never shop in a grocery store past 11am

Willpower is weakest when we're tired or stressed out. That usually hits a peak at the end of the workday. Always aim for early mornings when it comes to grocery shopping. You will be more likely to buy healthy things when your mind is well-rested, and the lineups are nonexistent. Who goes grocery shopping at 7am? No one. Perfect. I'll go at that time.

I've shopped at all hours of the day in order to satisfy impulses. One thing I notice is that anytime after 11am is crazy busy. If you can get in before people wake up, you're golden. Crowds of people add to the stress of the shopping experience, just like shopping the week before Christmas.

Pull yourself out of that unnecessary situation by avoiding grocery stores at peak times.

Also, never shop when you're hungry. Big mistake urggghh. That's when junk food overload happens.

Walking

Walking allows you to think calmly about things. Plus it's a nice form of gentle exercise for all ages. Nothing beats a walk outdoors on a sunny day. Rainy days are fun too.

There might be times when you just want to stay in and binge binge binge. If you can get outside, you will see drastic shifts to your life.

I find that my creativity skyrockets when doing a walk or run. I come up with a plethora (always wanted to use that word!) of ideas and capture them on a notes app.

For those suffering from obesity, depression or lack of desire to do anything, a walk is a great step in the right direction (is that an accidental pun?).

Netflix addiction

Speaking of bingeing, I just wanted to mention that Netflix, YouTube and all of these streaming platforms are fueling bad behaviours that we have yet to understand the impacts.

At the end of the day, all we want to do is grab a glass of wine and Little Debbie's, sit on the couch and watch 25 episodes of one season of one show we've never heard of before.

We're skipping real relationships for a consumptive lifestyle, and it's destroying us as a whole. One addiction can lead to another, and Netflix is the perfect partnership with junk food.

Luckily I'm not on Netflix, but I have a TV with this YouTube app on it. I can absolutely say that it is so addicting, that I would go grab a pint of ice cream to devour while watching random, useless things. It got to a point where I would have to have ice cream in my hand in order to watch something. This goes for movies too.

I would download a movie that interested me and require at least an ice cream pint to go with it, and usually three donuts, taking movie-watching to the ultimate junk food extreme.

Why are we doing this? To escape our miserable lives. We want to get away from the disaster that is our reality, by filling it with disastrous habits. Ahh tis the life of an addict.

Comedian addicts

A good portion of stand-up comedians are known for their substance abuse, and I don't think this will change anytime soon.

Why is that?

In order to survive as a comedian on a stage, you have to take gigs that happen at a range of ungodly hours. Some acts happen at midnight and well into the early morning! Good luck having a proper sleep schedule with that.

Then what happens is they need to eat at some point, yet because of scheduling, they're rushed to grab whatever they can at a 24-hour drive-thru.

One thing that the club host asks a performing comedian is what they'd like to drink or eat. To take the edge off those nerves and jitters, most gravitate to alcohol while they wait to go on stage. Perhaps some junk food too.

Then other comedians might be into drugs. Peer pressure ensues. I recently came across a podcast episode of these comedians talking about hard drugs like it was candy in a candy shop.

I've taken a range of different substances, just as a way of experimentation (try everything once yay!). Nothing too hard, but I could tell I wasn't 100% after taking them.

We numb the sensations we are afraid of, yet we shouldn't suppress them. It's natural to feel nervous before going on stage. It's natural to feel uncomfortable when doing uncomfortable things. We don't really need drugs for that.

When I used junk food as a way of dealing with my stress, I became more stressed. Nothing changed for the better. I just wanted more and more and more and more.

Now not all comedians are addicts, and what's exciting is the number of ways we can entertain people these days, beyond just the stage. With this excitement comes more stress and more stupid decisions while we navigate our ways. It's best to tap into our mind and not let the impulses get the best of us.

All easier said than done, which is why food, sleep and exercise can have positive impacts on stress management in unique job situations.

Handling social outings

If you don't want to become a hermit, there are ways to prep yourself for the peer pressure of junk food in social situations.

Be the designated driver and go with water. Don't eat anything.

Haha just kidding. Kind of.

I know water doesn't seem like the cool choice, but we're talking about your life here. It would be cooler if you lived a few more years. Maybe just say you want to maintain a healthy lifestyle if your friends are receptive to your feelings, and look for menu items that resonate with a cleaner option.

The worst thing you can do is order something out of peer pressure and stress out about it afterwards. Realize that perfection isn't always going to be there, and that's okay. Hakuna matata.

If you can be firm in your ways, that will make you more attractive to others. Saying exactly what you believe and value will always be respected over a weak disposition.

When it's all said and done, saying a firm no-thank-you is usually enough to kill the social pressure. You're on a mission and it's your journey. Don't let others take you off the path (that sounded very spiritual).

Emotions and relationships with food

There is a secret end-goal for you here. A goal that I haven't really connected the dots for you yet. With all of these sprinkled-in attempts at humour, I'm trying to develop a healthy relationship with food for you (and for me, selfishly).

Beyond these words being just a self-therapy exercise, these words are meant to make junk food seem comical in a sense, something we can laugh at, something we can observe from a distance (run-on sentence, anyone?). If we approach junk food addiction with an air of seriousness and distaste, we will never recover from the silly reality that we've been damaging our bodies for nothing!

Now you might be saying it's not funny, but it really is. The more you can poke fun at your situation, the quicker you can move past it. If your addiction is scary, it will always be looming in front of you, like a blood-sucking vampire. If you can poke fun at the elephant in the room, the elephant will become harmless to you.

It's a rewiring of the brain. We look at dark things and often say we have no way out of this. Instead, how can you shine light on this situation? Poke fun at it?

I'm not an advocate of self-deprecation unless your life needs a kickstart. Or you're too serious about critical feedback. Or you're human.

When you look at junk food as something there, but not ruling your life, you are effectively disassociating yourself from the devil. That's healthy.

Life transformation

Certainly my life is far from perfect, both before and after the addiction issues. However, there are some profoundly positive differences I'm noticing, even just after a few days of cutting out sugar. Before we get into that, let's look at my life quality before, during and after the addiction.

Before the addiction, I was skinny and fairly healthy (swimming daily). I had written and illustrated many children's books in my spare time and on bus commutes. I would wake up feeling tired most days, and I wasn't sure why. The diet was semi-clean, with occasional treats.

During the addiction, I was jobless, girlfriendless and rapidly spending money on junk I didn't need (moneyless). Every day was a hangover. I started gaining fat around my abdominal area, which is a sign of serious health problems (death!). My skin deteriorated to the point where I had red, dry, flaky rashes under my face (who would date that?). I was slower in the pool. I was slower with everything. I had mood issues. I got angry over nothing. I had constant afternoon naps...and morning naps and evening naps. My sleep was a disaster, waking at 2pm some days. My mind was always thinking about donuts and ice cream, at least five hours per day. The world seemed grey and lifeless. People seemed so far away from me, even my family.

After the addiction, I started losing some weight in my abdominal area. My sleep improved within days. My mood self-regulated. I had more energy to do the things I had been putting off. The world appeared a little more colourful to me. I was able to think clearly about life and my future. I was able to write this book.

Here's to hoping your life transforms too.

Bonus section that didn't make the cut

Here is a section that didn't make the cut, called - What is going through my head during cravings.

I want a donut, ideally the honey cruller. Yes, I'm going to leave my apartment today and grab that honey cruller, just for today. Just one donut.

Tomorrow I'll go back to eating my vegetables. Just one day, just one day.

I'll grab my car keys. Maybe I should walk? No, the car keys. Then I can hit up multiple locations faster, before they run out.

I should throw out these three bags filled with empty ice cream containers on my way down.

(Walking down the apartment stairs) I wonder if I should be doing this? I mean, I just had three donuts and ice cream yesterday. Ah, let's do it, it's just one day, just one donut, just one day.

Yes, I'll order three donuts. The honey cruller. The sour cream glazed. Annnnd the double chocolate. Oh and can I get an ice water too?

I should go to the grocery store, pick up some ice cream to go along with these donuts.

Ah, let's see what's on sale. Oh oh oh! Ben & Jerry's is on sale! I'll grab two pints, then I can have another later.

Oh maybe just one pint will do. After all, I just bought three donuts. Just one pint, just one pint, just one pint.

I'm so excited! Three donuts and two pints of ice cream, this is going to be a greeaaaat day!

Breakfast yum.

It's lunchtime and I'm feeling hungry. You know what? I think it's time for a burger at McDonald's. Oh I have a buy-one-get-one coupon! You know what? Let's go for a Big Mac annnnnnd chicken McNuggets with sweet and sour sauce! Yessss. Sweet and sour sauce (drool).

I think I should skip dinner. Not really feeling it with the vegetables tonight.

Good thing I got those two pints of ice cream earlier, at least there's dessert!

Oh Ben & Jerry, why are you so good to me?

Note:

I did not do too much editing on this book. The best of art can oftentimes be the art that is untouched. Just came up with the idea and wrote it in two days for you, my lovely. The hope is to give you something as raw as possible. I hope everything makes sense. If the world can be improved from my words, or you feel so disgusted by my situation that you stopped junk food cold turkey, that means the world to me.

xoxo Trev

